



LaPorte County Rural Broadband Task Force



Southern LaPorte County Coalition

September 20, 2021

LaPorte Broadband Task Force

Vision:

Equitable deployment and utilization of adequate broadband infrastructure to improve the quality of life and competitiveness of every resident, business, and organization in LaPorte County.



LaPorte County Rural Broadband Task Force

Mission:

Ensure LaPorte County plans for, transitions to, and prospers in the digital age through a transformation into a human-centered digitally-inclusive technology-ready ecosystem.



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR LAPORTE COUNTY BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT & UTILIZATION

MISSION: Ensure La Porte County plans for, transitions to, and prospers in the digital age through a transformation into a human-centered, digitally-inclusive, technology-ready ecosystem.

VISION: Equitable deployment and utilization of adequate broadband infrastructure to improve the quality of life and competitiveness of every resident, business, and organization in La Porte County.

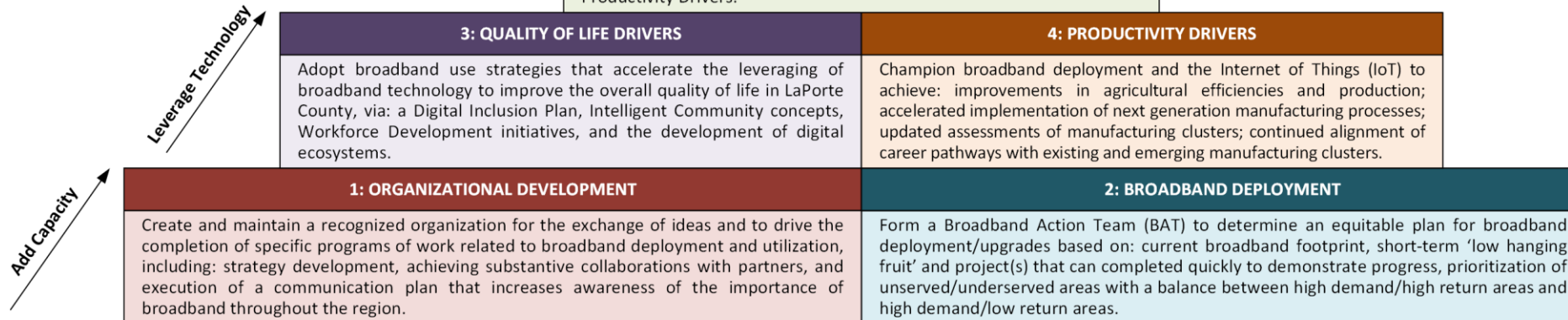
Five 'Cornerstones' of Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan:

5: LAPORTE COUNTY NEXT GENERATION INNOVATION FUND

Develop Public-Private partnerships to secure investment funding and local/regional loans and grants to create an Innovation Fund in support of locally-driven visionary ideas that support the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan 'Cornerstones' of Quality of Life Drivers and Productivity Drivers.

FIVE 'CORNERSTONES': The 'Cornerstones' provide a structure to:

- Organize Strategic Plan elements
- Identify priorities over a three year period to optimize the contributions of Task Force members
- Provide a means to quantify, measure and track achievements



1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	GOAL 1.1 Establish Work Groups to Optimize Contributions of Task Force Volunteers			1.2 Identify LaPorte County staff to support the RBTF			1.3 Identify a Partner & Responsibility Matrix that supports RBTF goals			1.4 Execute a Communication Plan to constantly communicate expectations to public			1.5 Establish Advisory Councils that support RBTF goals			1.6 Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure progress			1.7 Establish Document Management and Archival System		
	OBJECTIVES			2019			2019			2019			2019			2019			2019		
	2020			2020			2020			2020			2020			2020			2020		
	2021			2021			2021			2021			2021			2021			2021		
	Communication			Office of Community & Econ. Dev., GIS, E-911, County Library			Engage constituencies who rely on internet connectivity to be competitive			Issue communications across multiple platforms on a defined/regular basis			Form Councils: Agriculture, Manufacturing, E-Learning, Health Care			Research leading edge public/private digital inclusion entities			Repository for all RBTF documents and work product with access protocols		
	Mapping/Data			Assign additional support staff based on emerging trends			Formalize partner responsibility expectations and contributions			Website, blog, Storytelling feature to enhance interest and community engagement			Add additional Advisory Councils based on emerging trends			Define KPIs aligned to Mission/Vision			Reconfirm repository access protocols based on emerging trends		
	Influencers			Reconfirm makeup of support staff based on defined next steps			Reconfirm Constituency Matrix and partnership objectives based on defined next steps			Issue first comprehensive Outcomes Re-port to County residents			Reconfirm makeup of Advisory Councils based on defined next steps			Self-Audit of KPIs for inclusion into Outcomes Report			Reconfirm repository access protocols based on defined next steps		
	Digital Inclusion																				

Each individual member/collaborator will bring their expertise to the table, serving a vital role in guiding LaPorte County on a pathway which will allow us to analyze this important issue, assess options and technology, and then work with an expanding group of partners to fund and build out projects. By bringing a range of skills and experience to the table for this critical undertaking: we aim to develop a plan based on facts, best practices and availability of this critically important infrastructure; and we aim to propose an economically viable, common sense solution that will serve LaPorte County well into the future.

2: BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT

GOAL 2.1			2.2			2.3			2.4			2.5			2.6			2.7		
Form a diverse Broadband Action Team (BAT)			Identify current footprint of broadband infrastructure and services			Identify current map of local physical assets and educational resources			Establish broadband connectivity service level protocols			Establish guidelines for various broadband deployment models			Identify short-term project schedule and 'low-hanging fruit'			Equity-Based Deployment Prioritization Plan		
OBJECTIVES	2019	Schools, Local Officials, Neighborhood Assoc., ISPs, Bankers, Telco & Elec. Co-Ops, Faith Org.	OBJECTIVES	2019	Data validation with: survey; speed tests; public input; other data from apps	OBJECTIVES	2019	Map: water towers, antennas, grain silos, schools, libraries and health care services	OBJECTIVES	2019	Issue minimum service requirements for broadband deployment projects	OBJECTIVES	2019	Assess: private led; public-private (w/co-ops); co-ops; County/Mini.; open access	OBJECTIVES	2019	Follow-up on NxLevel Connections Phase 1 grant applications & prepare project list	OBJECTIVES	2019	Define prioritization framework
	2020	Add additional BAT members based on emerging trends		2020	Topology and density analysis to rate deployment option challenges		2020	GIS mapping of manufacturing companies in LaPorte County		2020	Supplement minimum requirements based on emerging technologies		2020	Issue Deployment Model Protocols		2020	Complete 'low-hanging fruit' objectives		2020	Use results of 2.2 and 2.3 to finalize Equity-Based Deployment Prioritization Plan
	2021	Reconfirm makeup of BAT based on defined next steps		2021	Reconfirm footprint of broadband infrastructure and services		2021	Map: CTE high school student clusters; STEM programs and Robotics Team clusters		2021	Reconfirm service protocols based on defined next steps		2021	Reconfirm Deployment Model Protocols based on defined next steps		2021	Develop 2 nd round of 'low-hanging fruit' objectives and begin implementation		2021	Reconfirm deployment plan based on emerging trends

Access to high speed internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Just like electricity and water are essential utilities, internet access is now an integral part of our life as a utility. Our goal is to even the playing field so that children in rural communities have the same access to the internet to do their homework as the kids in our cities do. Broadband is essential to our businesses, farms, and health care facilities who rely on internet to stay competitive and to do their daily work.

3: QUALITY OF LIFE DRIVERS

GOAL 3.1			3.2		
Digital Inclusion Plan			Communication of Quality of Life Drivers		
OBJECTIVES	2019	Subscribership, digital literacy/use; Intelligent Community; Workforce Dev.	OBJECTIVES	2019	Compile 'Stories' of broadband impacts to promote RBTF Mission and Vision
	2020	Development of Equity-based Digital Ecosystems		2020	Prepare blogs, Fact Sheets, graphics of Quality of Life impacts
	2021	Issue Digital Inclusion Plan		2021	Reassess Quality of Life communication strategy based on defined next steps

The general public must understand that broadband access has become an essential utility to maintain and then improve current levels of Quality of Life in LaPorte County.

4: PRODUCTIVITY DRIVERS

GOAL 4.1			4.2		
Promote Manufacturing Cluster Efficiencies			Promote Next Generation Agricultural and Manufacturing Practices		
OBJECTIVES	2019	Document and map current assessments of manufacturing clusters	OBJECTIVES	2019	Connect Ag producers and manufacturers to technical resource providers
	2020	Identify emerging clusters and promote a LaPorte County digital supply chain		2020	Conduct a LaPorte County Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Symposium
	2021	Support alignment of high school career pathways with current and emerging clusters		2021	Identify emerging issues in next generation Ag/Man. practices

As the LaPorte County digital ecosystem is deployed, substantive engagement with end-user constituencies will accelerate a faster return on the broadband deployment investment.

5: LAPORTE COUNTY NEXT GENERATION INNOVATION FUND

GOAL 5.1			5.2		
Form a Broadband Innovation Fund Team			Create Endowment for Next Generation Innovation Fund		
OBJECTIVES	2019	{No scheduled activities for this item in 2019.}	OBJECTIVES	2019	{No scheduled activities for this item in 2019.}
	2020	Research funding opportunity Best Practices; loan and grant programs		2020	{No scheduled activities for this item in 2020.}
	2021	Engage banks, Economic Development officials & Community Foundations		2021	Create fund and work on building reserves

Along with planning and support functions, funding will be required to achieve the goals of broadband deployment and utilization.

Yates Engineering Executive Summary

Introduction: Though LaPorte County contains two significant metropolitan areas in LaPorte and Michigan City, that have adequate broadband service, much of the county is rural and likely un- or underserved. As the events of 2020 have shown, high-speed, reliable, symmetrical Internet service can and should be considered a crucial aspect of public infrastructure. Remote learning, remote working, and telehealth service have become commonplace, and without sufficient Internet speeds, rural residents of the county are locked out of many opportunities. For this reason, LaPorte County has commissioned Yates Engineering Services (YES) to prepare GIS layouts for fiber-to-the-premise deployment in 20 townships, as well as town of Wanatah, for a total of 21 different designs.

Mission: This report will help the County set expectations when it comes to the financial burden of deploying fiber and that it will be useful in determining which townships should be prioritized in the initial stages of a fiber-to-the premises project.



OCRA's Next Level Broadband Grant

Indiana will invest \$270 million toward improving broadband access and adoption in Indiana. The Next Level Connections Broadband Grant Program is designed to provide funds for the deployment of broadband infrastructure to provide eligible broadband service to unserved end users, which include households, businesses and community anchor institutions, such as schools and health clinics, across Indiana.

In order to help citizens throughout La Porte County, the Office of Community & Economic Development is partnering with two service providers: *ACME Communications* and *Surf Broadband* on this grant application.





Thank You!

